

JOSEPH SMITH

*Tells His
Own Story...*
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FOREWORD

The following narrative is composed of extracts from the extensive and detailed history compiled by Joseph Smith, and recounts in his own words some of the most important events which led to the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

This brief account has been translated into many languages, and the story here told is familiar to hundreds of thousands of his followers in many lands.



—Photograph by Geo. K. Lewis.

**Memorial Cottage and Monument
BIRTHPLACE OF JOSEPH SMITH
Sharon, Vermont**

JOSEPH SMITH'S OWN STORY

I WAS born in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and five, on the twenty-third day of December, in the town of Sharon, Windsor County, State of Vermont. My father, Joseph Smith, Sr., left the State of Vermont and moved to Palmyra, Ontario (now Wayne County), in the State of New York, when I was in my tenth year, or thereabouts. In about four years after my father's arrival in Palmyra, he moved with his family into Manchester, in the same County of Ontario.

Some time in the second year after our removal to Manchester, there was in the place where we lived an unusual excitement on the subject of religion. It commenced with the Methodists, but soon became general among all the sects in that region. Indeed, the whole district seemed affected by it, and great multitudes united themselves to the different religious parties, which created no small stir and division amongst the people, some crying, "Lo here!" and others, "Lo there!" Some were contending for the Methodist faith, some for the Presbyterian, and some for the Baptist.

For notwithstanding the great love which the converts to these different faiths expressed at the time of their conversion, and the great zeal manifested by the respective clergy, who were active in getting up and promoting this extraordinary scene of religious feeling, in order to have everybody converted, as they were pleased to call it, let them join what sect they pleased—yet when the converts began to file off, some to one party and some to another, it was seen that the seemingly good feeling of both the priests and the converts were more pretended than real, for a scene of great confusion and bad feeling ensued, priest contending against priest and convert against convert, so that all good feelings one for another, if they ever had any, were entirely lost in the strife of words and a contest about opinions.

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I was at this time in my fifteenth year. My father's family was proselyted to the Presbyterian faith, and four of them joined the church, namely—my mother, Lucy; my brothers Hyrum and Samuel Harrison; and my sister Sophronia.

During this time of great excitement, my mind was called up to serious reflection and great uneasiness; but though my feelings were deep and often poignant, still I kept myself aloof from all these parties, though I attended their several meetings as often as occasion would permit. In process of time my mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist Sect, and I felt some desire to be united with them but so great were the confusion and strife among the different denominations, that it was impossible for a person young as I was, and so unacquainted with men and things, to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong.

My mind at times was greatly excited, the cry and tumult were so great and incessant.

In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions I often said to myself, What is to be done? Who of all these parties is right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?

While I was laboring under the extreme difficulties caused by the contests of these parties of religionists, I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which reads: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom of God, I did, for how to act I did not know, and unless I could get more wisdom than I then had, I would never know, for the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passage of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible.

HIS FIRST VISION

At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is, ask of God. I at length came to the determination to ask God, concluding that if He gave wisdom to them that lacked wisdom, and would give liberally, and not upbraid, I might venture.

So in accordance with this, my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt. It was on the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty. It was the first time in my life that I had made such an attempt, for amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally.

After I had retired to the place where I had previously designed to go, having looked around me, and finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction.

But exerting all my power to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was ready to sink to despair and abandon myself to destruction—not to an imaginary ruin, but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world, who had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my being—just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name, and said, pointing to the other—“This is my Beloved Son, hear Him!”

My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to



—Photograph by Fellowcraft Studios.

SMITH HOME, PALMYRA, NEW YORK

join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right—and which I should join.

I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in His sight, that those professors were all corrupt; that "they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof."

He again forbade me to join with any of them; and many other things did He say unto me, which I cannot write at this time. When I came to myself again, I found myself lying on my back, looking up into heaven.

Some few weeks after I had this vision, I happened to be in company with one of the Methodist preachers, who was very active in the before mentioned religious excitement, and, con-

versing with him on the subject of religion, I took occasion to give him an account of the vision which I had had. I was greatly surprised at his behavior, he treated my communication not only lightly, but with great contempt, saying it was all of the devil, that there were no such things as visions or revelations in these days, that all such things had ceased with the apostles, and that there would never be any more of them.

I soon found, however, that my telling the story had excited a great deal of prejudice against me among professors of religion, and was the cause of great persecution, which, continued to increase; and though I was an obscure boy, only between fourteen and fifteen years of age, and my circumstances in life such as to make a boy of no consequence in the world, yet men of high standing would take notice sufficient to excite the public mind against me, and create a bitter persecution; and this was common among all the sects—all united to persecute me.

It caused me serious reflection then, and often has since, how very strange it was that an obscure boy of a little over fourteen years of age, and one, too, who was doomed to the necessity of obtaining a scanty maintenance by his daily labor, should be thought a character of sufficient importance to attract the attention of the great ones of the most popular sects of the day, and in a manner to create in them a spirit of the most bitter persecution and reviling. But strange or not, so it was, and it was often the cause of great sorrow to myself.

However, it was nevertheless a fact that I had beheld a vision. I have thought since, that I felt much like Paul, when he made his defense before King Agrippa, and related the account of the vision he had when he saw a light and heard a voice, still there were but few who believed him, some said he was dishonest, others said he was mad, and he was ridiculed and reviled. But all this did not destroy the reality of his vision. He had seen a vision, he knew he had, and all the persecution under heaven could not make it otherwise, and though they should persecute him unto death, yet he knew, and would know to his latest breath, that he had both seen a light and heard a voice speaking unto him, and all the world could not make him think or believe otherwise.

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So it was with me. I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me, and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true, and while they were persecuting me, reviling me, and speaking all manner of evil against me falsely for so saying, I was led to say in my heart: Why persecute me for telling the truth? I had actually seen a vision, and who am I that I can withstand God, or why does the world think to make me deny what I have actually seen? For I had seen a vision, I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it, at least I knew that by so doing I would offend God and come under condemnation.

I had now got my mind satisfied, so far as the sectarian world was concerned, that it was not my duty to join with any of them, but to continue as I was until further directed. I had found the testimony of James to be true, that a man who lacked wisdom might ask of God, and obtain, and not be upbraided.

MORONI'S VISIT

I continued to pursue my common vocations in life until the twenty-first of September, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-three, all of the time suffering severe persecution at the hands of all classes of men, both religious and irreligious, because I continued to affirm that I had seen a vision.

During the space of time which intervened between the time I had the vision and the year eighteen hundred and twenty-three—having been forbidden to join any of the religious sects of the day, and being of very tender years, and persecuted by those who ought to have been my friends and to have treated me kindly, and if they supposed me to be deluded to have endeavored in a proper and affectionate manner to have reclaimed me—I was left to all kinds of temptations, and mingling with all kinds of society, I frequently fell into many foolish errors, and displayed the weakness of youth, and the foibles of human nature, which, I am sorry to say led me into divers temptations, offensive in the sight of God. In making this confession, no one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins. A disposition to commit such was never in my nature.

In consequence of these things, I often felt condemned for my weakness and imperfections, when, on the evening of the above mentioned twenty-first of September, after I had retired to bed for the night, I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies and also for a manifestation to me, that I might know of my state and standing before Him, for I had full confidence in obtaining a divine manifestation, as I previously had one.

While I was thus in the act of calling upon God I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than a noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor.



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THE SACRED GROVE

Smith Farm, Palmyra, New York

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He had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness. It was a whiteness beyond anything earthly I had ever seen, nor do I believe that any earthly thing could be made to appear so exceedingly white and brilliant. His hands were naked, and his arms also, a little above the wrists, so, also, were his feet naked, as were his legs, a little above the ankles. His head and neck were bare. I could discover that he had no other clothing on but his robe, as it was open, so that I could see into his bosom.

Not only was his robe exceedingly white, but his whole person was glorious beyond description, and his countenance truly like lightning. The room was extremely light, but not so very bright as immediately around his person. When I first looked upon him I was afraid, but the fear soon left me.

He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Moroni, that God had a work for me to do; and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people.

He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fulness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it; as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants.

Also, that there were two stones in silver bows—and these stones, fastened to a breastplate, constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim—deposited with the plates; and the possession and use of these stones were what constituted "seers" in ancient or former times; and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book.

After telling me these things, he commenced quoting the prophecies of the Old Testament. He first quoted part of the third chapter of Malachi, and he quoted also the fourth or last chapter of the same prophecy, though with a little variation from the way it reads in our Bibles. Instead of quoting the first verse as it reads in our books, he quoted it thus:

"For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall burn

as stubble; for they that come shall burn them, saith the Lord of Hosts that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

And again he quoted the fifth verse, thus: "Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the Prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

He also quoted the next verse differently: "And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promise made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers; if it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at His coming."

In addition to these he quoted the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, saying that it was about to be fulfilled. He quoted also the third chapter of Acts, twenty-second and twenty-third verses, precisely as they stand in our New Testament. He said that, that prophet was Christ, but the day had not yet come when they who would not hear His voice should be cut off from among the people, but soon would come.

He also quoted the second chapter of Joel, from the twenty-eighth verse to the last. He also said that this was not yet fulfilled, but was soon to be. And he further stated that the fulness of the Gentiles was soon to come in. He quoted many other passages of scripture, and offered many explanations which cannot be mentioned here.

Again he told me that when I got those plates of which he had spoken—for the time that they should be obtained was not yet fulfilled—I should not show them to any person; neither the breastplate with the Urim and Thummim; only to those to whom I should be commanded to show them; if I did I should be destroyed. While he was conversing with me about the plates, the vision was opened to my mind that I could see the place where the plates were deposited, and that so clearly and distinctly that I knew the place again when I visited it.

After this communication, I saw the light in the room begin to gather immediately around the person of him who had been speaking to me, and it continued to do so, until the room was again left dark, except just around him, when instantly I saw as it were, a conduit open right up into heaven, and he ascended

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till he entirely disappeared, and the room was left as it had been before this heavenly light had made its appearance.

I lay musing on the singularity of the scene, and marveling greatly at what had been told to me by this extraordinary messenger, when, in the midst of my meditation, I suddenly discovered that my room was again beginning to get lighted, and in an instant, as it were, the same heavenly messenger was again by my bedside.

He commenced, and again related the very same things which he had done at his first visit, without the least variation; which having done, he informed me of great judgments which were coming upon the earth, with great desolations by famine, sword, and pestilence, and that these grievous judgments would come on the earth in this generation. Having related these things, he again ascended as he had done before.

By this time, so deep were the impressions made on my mind, that sleep had fled from my eyes, and I lay overwhelmed in astonishment at what I had both seen and heard. But what was my surprise when again I beheld the same messenger at my bedside, and heard him rehearse or repeat over again to me the same things as before, and added a caution to me, telling me that Satan would try to tempt me (in consequence of the indigent circumstances of my father's family), to get the plates for the purpose of getting rich. This he forbade me, saying that I must have no other object in view in getting the plates but to glorify God, and must not be influenced by any other motive than that of building His Kingdom, otherwise I could not get them.

After this third visit he again ascended into heaven as before, and I was again left to ponder on the strangeness of what I had just experienced, when almost immediately after the heavenly messenger had ascended from me for the third time, the cock crowed, and I found that day was approaching, so that our interviews must have occupied the whole of that night.

I shortly after arose from my bed, and, as usual, went to the necessary labors of the day, but, in attempting to work as at other times, I found my strength so exhausted as to render me entirely unable. My father, who was laboring along with me, discovered something to be wrong with me, and told me

to go home. I started with the intention of going to the house, but, in attempting to cross the fence out of the field where we were, my strength entirely failed me, and I fell helpless on the ground, and for a time was quite unconscious of anything.

The first thing that I can recollect was a voice speaking unto me, calling me by name. I looked up and beheld the same messenger standing over my head, surrounded by light as before. He then again related unto me all that he had related unto me the previous night, and commanded me to go to my father and tell him of the vision and commandments which I had received.

I obeyed, I returned to my father in the field, and rehearsed the whole matter to him. He replied to me that it was of God, and he told me to go and do as commanded by the messenger. I left the field, and went to the place where the messenger had told me the plates were deposited; and owing to the distinctness of the vision which I had concerning it, I knew the place the instant that I arrived there.



JOSEPH RECEIVES THE PLATES

THE SACRED RECORD

Convenient to the village of Manchester, Ontario County, New York, stands a hill of considerable size, and the most elevated of any in the neighborhood. On the west side of this hill, not far from the top, under a stone of considerable size, lay the plates, deposited in a stone box. This stone was thick and rounding in the middle on the upper side, and thinner toward the edges, so that the middle part of it was visible above the ground, but the edge all around was covered with earth.

Having removed the earth, I obtained a lever, which I got fixed under the edge of the stone, and with a little exertion

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raised it up. I looked in, and there indeed did I behold the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the breastplate, as stated by the messenger. The box in which they lay was formed by laying stones together in some kind of cement. In the bottom of the box were two stones crossways of the box, and on these stones lay the plates and other things with them.

I made an attempt to take them out, but was forbidden by the messenger, and was again informed that the time for bringing them forth had not yet arrived, neither would it until four years from that time, but he told me that I should come to that place precisely in one year from that time, and that he would there meet with me, and that I should continue to do so until the time should come for obtaining the plates.

Accordingly, as I had been commanded, I went at the end of each year, and at each time I found the same messenger there, and received instructions and intelligence from him at each of our interviews, respecting what the Lord was going to do, and how and in what manner His Kingdom was to be conducted in the last days.

As my father's worldly circumstances were very limited we were under the necessity of laboring with our hands, hiring out by the day's work and otherwise, as we could get opportunity. Sometimes we were at home, and sometimes abroad, and by continuous labor were enabled to get a comfortable maintenance.

In the month of October, 1825, I hired with an old gentleman by the name of Josiah Stoal, of Chenango County, State of New York. During the time that I was thus employed I was put to board with a Mr. Isaac Hale, of Harmony, Susquehannah County, Pennsylvania. It was there I first saw my wife (his daughter), Emma Hale. On the 18th day of January, 1827, we were married, while I was yet employed in the service of Mr. Stoal. Immediately after my marriage, I left Mr. Stoal's and went to my father's and farmed with him that season.

At length the time arrived for obtaining the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the breastplate. On the twenty-second day of September, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-seven, having gone as usual at the end of another year to the place where they were deposited, the same heavenly messenger delivered them up to me with this charge: that I should be responsible

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for them; that if I should let them go carelessly, or through any neglect of mine, I should be cut off, but that if I should use all my endeavors to preserve them, until he, the messenger, should call for them, they should be protected.

I soon found out the reason why I had received such strict charges to keep them safe, and why it was that the messenger had said that when I had done what was required at my hand, he would call for them. For no sooner was it known that I had them, than the most strenuous exertions were used to get them from me. Every stratagem that could be invented was resorted to for that purpose. The persecution became more bitter and severe than before, and multitudes were on the alert continually to get them from me if possible. But by the wisdom of God, they remained safe in my hands, until I had accomplished by them what was required at my hand. When according to arrangement, the messenger called for them, I delivered them up to him, and he has them in his charge until this day, being the second day of May, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight.

The excitement, however, still continued, and rumor with her thousand tongues was all the time employed in circulating falsehoods about my father's family, and about myself. If I were to relate a thousandth part of them, it would fill up volumes. The persecution, however, became so intolerable that I was under the necessity of leaving Manchester, and going with my wife to Susquehannah County in the State of Pennsylvania. While preparing to start—being very poor, and the persecution so heavy upon us that there was no probability that we would ever be otherwise—in the midst of our afflictions we found a friend in a gentleman by the name of Martin Harris, who came to us and gave us fifty dollars to assist us on our journey. Mr. Harris was a resident of Palmyra Township, Wayne County, in the State of New York, and a farmer of respectability.

By this timely aid I was enabled to reach the place of my destination in Pennsylvania, and immediately after my arrival there I commenced copying the characters off the plates. I copied a considerable number of them, and by means of the Urim and Thummim I translated some of them, which I did between the



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THE HILL CUMORAH

Palmyra, New York

time I arrived at the house of my wife's father in the month of December, and the February following.

Sometime in this month of February, the aforementioned Mr. Martin Harris came to our place, got the characters which I had drawn off the plates, and started with them to the city of New York. For what took place relative to him and the characters, I refer to his own account of the circumstances, as he related them to me after his return, which was as follows:

"I went to the city of New York, and presented the characters which had been translated, with the translation thereof, to Professor Charles Anthon, a gentleman celebrated for his literary attainments: Professor Anthon stated that the translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from Egyptian. I then showed him those which were not yet translated, and he said that they were Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyriac, and Arabic; and he said they were true characters. He gave me a certificate, certifying to the people of Palmyra that they were true characters, and that the translation of such of them as had been translated was also correct. I took the certificate and put it into my pocket, and was just leaving the house, when Mr. Anthon called me back, and asked me how the young man found out that there were gold plates in the place where he found them, I answered that an angel of God had revealed it unto him.

"He then said to me. 'Let me see that certificate.' I accordingly took it out of my pocket and gave it to him, when he took it and tore it to pieces, saying that there was no such thing now as ministering of angels, and that if I would bring the plates to him, he would translate them. I informed him that part of the plates were sealed, and that I was forbidden to bring them. He replied, 'I cannot read a sealed book.' I left him and went to Dr. Mitchell, who sanctioned what Professor Anthon had said respecting both the characters and the translation."

On the 5th of April, 1829, Oliver Cowdery came to my house, until which time I had never seen him. He stated to me that having been teaching school in the neighborhood where my father resided, and my father being one of those who sent to the school, he went to board for a season at his house, and

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while there the family related to him the circumstances of my having received the plates, and accordingly he had come to make inquiries of me.

Two days after the arrival of Mr. Cowdery (being the 7th of April), I commenced to translate the Book of Mormon and he began to write for me.

THE PRIESTHOOD RESTORED

We still continued the work of translation, when, in the ensuing month (May, 1829), we on a certain day went into the woods to pray and inquire of the Lord respecting baptism for the remission of sins, that we found mentioned in the translation of the plates. While we were thus employed, praying and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us saying:

"Upon you my fellow servants in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the Gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness."

He said this Aaronic Priesthood had not the power of laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that this should be conferred on us hereafter, and he commanded us to go and be baptized, and gave us directions that I should baptize Oliver Cowdery, and that afterwards he should baptize me.

Accordingly we went and were baptized. I baptized him first, and afterward he baptized me — after which I laid my hands upon his head and ordained him to the Aaronic Priesthood, afterwards he laid his hands on me and ordained me to the same priesthood—for so we were commanded.

The messenger who visited us on this occasion and conferred this Priesthood upon us, said that his name was John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament; and that he acted under the direction of Peter, James and John, who held the keys of the Priesthood of Melchizedek, which Priesthood, he said, would in due time be conferred on us, and that I should be called the first Elder of the Church, and he

(Oliver Cowdery) the second. It was the fifteenth day of May, 1829, that we were ordained under the hand of this messenger, and baptized.

Immediately on our coming up out of the water after we had been baptized, we experienced great and glorious blessings from our Heavenly Father. No sooner had I baptized Oliver Cowdery, than the Holy Ghost fell upon him, and he stood up and prophesied many things which should shortly come to pass. And again, so soon as I had been baptized by him, I also had the spirit of prophecy, when, standing up, I prophesied concerning the rise of this Church, and many other things connected with the Church, and this generation of the children of men. We were filled with the Holy Ghost, and rejoiced in the God of our salvation.

Our minds being now enlightened, we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us in a manner which we never could attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of. In the meantime we were forced to keep secret the circumstance of our having received the Priesthood and our having been baptized, owing to a spirit of persecution which had already manifested itself in the neighborhood.

We had been threatened with being mobbed, from time to time, and this, too, by professors of religion. And their intentions of mobbing us were only counteracted by the influence of my wife's family, (under Divine Providence), who had become very friendly to me, and who were opposed to mobs, and were willing that I should be allowed to continue the work of translation without interruption; and therefore offered and promised us protection from all unlawful proceedings, as far as in them lay.

WITNESSES

In the course of the work of translation, we ascertained that three special witnesses were to be provided by the Lord, to whom he would grant that they should see the plates from which the **Book of Mormon** should be translated; and that these witnesses should bear record of the same, as will be found recorded, **Book of Mormon**, Book of Ether, chapter 5, verses 2, 3



and 4, also II Nephi, chapter 11, verse 3. Almost immediately after we had made this discovery, it occurred to Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris that they would have me inquire of the Lord to know if they might not obtain of Him the privilege to be these three special witnesses. (Inquiry was made of the Lord and it was revealed that these three should be the special witnesses.)

Not many days after, Martin Harris, David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery and myself agreed to retire into the woods

and try to obtain, by fervent and humble prayer, the fulfillment of the promises given—that they should have a view of the plates. We accordingly made choice of a piece of woods convenient to Mr. Whitmer's house, to which we retired, and having knelt down, we began to pray in much faith to Almighty God to bestow upon us a realization of these promises.

According to previous arrangement, I commenced by vocal prayer to our Heavenly Father, and was followed by each of the others in succession. We did not at first trial, however, obtain any answer or manifestation of divine favor in our behalf. We again observed the same order of prayer, each calling on and praying fervently to God in rotation, but with the same result as before.

Upon this, our second failure, Martin Harris proposed that he should withdraw himself from us, believing as he expressed himself, that his presence was the cause of our not obtaining what we wished for. He accordingly withdrew from us, and we knelt down again, and had not been many minutes engaged in prayer, when presently we beheld a light above us in the air, of exceeding brightness; and behold, an angel stood before us. In his hands he held the plates. He turned over the leaves one by one, so that we could see them, and discern the engravings



thereon distinctly. He then addressed himself to David Whitmer, and said, "David, blessed is the Lord, and he that keeps his commandments"; when, immediately afterwards, we heard a voice from out of the bright light above us saying, "These plates have been revealed by the power of God, and they have been translated by the power of God. The translation of them which you have seen is correct, and I command you to bear record of what you now see and hear."

I now left David and Oliver and went in pursuit of Martin Harris, whom I found at a considerable distance fervently engaged in prayer. He soon told me, however, that he had not yet prevailed with the Lord, and earnestly requested me to join him in prayer, that he also might realize the same blessings which we had just received. We accordingly joined in prayer, and ultimately obtained our desire, for before we had yet finished the same vision was opened to our view, at least it was again opened to me, and I once more beheld and heard the same things; whilst at the same moment Martin Harris cried out, apparently in an ecstasy of joy, "'Tis enough, 'tis enough! mine eyes have beheld; mine eyes have beheld" and jumping up he shouted, "Hosanna," blessing God, and otherwise rejoicing exceedingly.

Having thus, through the mercy of God, obtained these glorious manifestations, it now remained for these three individuals to fulfill the commandments which they had received, viz., to bear record of these things; in order to accomplish which, they drew up and subscribed the following document:

THE TESTIMONY OF THREE WITNESSES

"Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people unto whom this work shall come, that we, through the grace of

Joseph Smith's Own Story

God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record—which is a record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, their brethren, and also of the people of Jared who came from the tower of which hath been spoken, and we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for His voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true. And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates, and they have been shown unto us by the power of God, and not of man; and we declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true, and it is marvelous in our eyes; nevertheless, the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it; wherefore to be obedient unto the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things; and we know that if we are faithful in Christ, we shall rid our garments of the blood of all men, and be found spotless before the judgment seat of Christ; and shall dwell with Him eternally in the heavens. And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen."

Oliver Cowdery,

David Whitmer,

Martin Harris.

Soon after these things had transpired, the following additional testimony was obtained.

THE TESTIMONY OF EIGHT WITNESSES

"Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people unto whom this work shall come, that Joseph Smith, Jun., the translator of this work has shown unto us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated, we did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work and of

curious workmanship. And this we bear record, with words of soberness, that the said Smith has shown unto us, for we have seen and hefted, and know of a surety that the said Smith has got the plates of which we have spoken. And we give our names unto the world to witness unto the world that which we have seen. And we lie not, God bearing witness of it."

Christian Whitmer,
Jacob Whitmer,
Peter Whitmer, Jun.,
John Whitmer,
Hiram Page,
Joseph Smith, Sen.,
Hyrum Smith,
Samuel H. Smith.

We now became anxious to have that promise realized to us, which the angel that conferred on us the Aaronic Priesthood had given us, viz., that provided we continued faithful, we should also have the Melchizedek Priesthood, which holds the authority of the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

(The Prophet declared thereafter that the Melchizedek Priesthood was received under the hands of Peter, James and John, at a place along the banks of the Susquehanna River, between Harmony, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, and Colesville, Broome County, New York.)

THE CHURCH ESTABLISHED

Whilst the **Book of Mormon** was in the hands of the printer we still continued to bear testimony and give information, as fast as we had opportunity; and also made known to our brethren that we had received a commandment to organize the Church; and accordingly we met together for that purpose at the house of Mr. Peter Whitmer, Sr., (being six in number) on Tuesday, the sixth of April, A.D., one thousand eight hundred and thirty. Having opened the meeting by solemn prayer to our Heavenly Father, we proceeded according to previous commandment, to call on our brethren to know whether they ac-

Joseph Smith's Own Story

cepted us as their teachers in the things of the Kingdom of God, and whether they were satisfied that we should proceed and be organized as a church according to said commandment which we had received. To these several propositions they consented by a unanimous vote. I then laid my hands upon Oliver Cowdery, and ordained him an Elder of the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints"; after which he ordained me also to the office of an Elder of said Church. We then took bread, blessed it, and brake it with them; also wine, blessed it, and drank it with them. We then laid our hands on each individual member of the Church present, that they might receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and be confirmed members of the Church of Christ. The Holy Ghost was poured out upon us to a very great degree—some prophesied, whilst we all praised the Lord and rejoiced exceedingly.

We now proceeded to call out and ordain some others of the brethren to different offices of the Priesthood, according as the Spirit manifested unto us; and after a happy time spent in witnessing and feeling for ourselves the power and blessings of the Holy Ghost through the grace of God bestowed upon us, we dismissed with the pleasing knowledge that we were now individually members of, and acknowledged of God, "The Church of Jesus Christ," organized in accordance with commandments and revelations given by Him to ourselves in these last days, as well as according to the order of the Church as recorded in the New Testament.

This is the simple direct story of Joseph Smith, giving some of those events which led to the founding of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Shortly after the establishment of the Church, he with his followers removed from New York to Kirtland, Ohio, near Cleveland. There a beautiful temple was built, extensive missionary work was instituted, and the Church made substantial gains in membership. Among the missions opened from this point was one in Missouri, and to this place the body of the Church was later removed.

EXHORTATION
OF MORONI

AND WHEN YE SHALL RECEIVE THESE
STYLICS, WOULD EXHORT YOU THAT YE
WOULD ASK GOD THE ETERNAL FATHER
IN THE NAME OF CHRIST, IF THESE
THINGS ARE NOT TRUE; AND IF YE SHALL
ASK WITH A SINCERE HEART, WITH
ZEAL INTENSELY HAVING FAITH IN CHRIST,
HE WILL Manifest THE TRUTH
OF IT UNTO YOU BY THE POWER
OF THE HOLY GHOST.

MORONI 10:4

Joseph Smith's Own Story

This was a time of religious intolerance, and antagonism was soon stirred up against the Latter-day Saints. Mobs came against them, dispossessed them, compelling them to move, leaving behind them their homes, their well-cultivated farms, and their houses of worship.

To Illinois they went, where in their distress, they were received kindly. At a desolate spot on the Mississippi they purchased a large tract of swamp land. This they drained, and here they built what became the largest city in Illinois—Nauvoo, "the beautiful." Missionary efforts, both in America and England, greatly increased their numbers, and here they prospered for a season.

But the peace of Nauvoo was short-lived. Again bitter religious intolerance led to persecution. Joseph Smith, with his brother Hyrum, was imprisoned under false charges in Carthage, Illinois. There, while awaiting trial under the guaranteed protection of the State, they were shot and killed June 27, 1844, by an armed mob with painted faces.

Brigham Young succeeded to the leadership of the Church. Under his direction the Latter-day Saints left Illinois and made their historic trek to the Rocky Mountains, where through struggle and faith they have become a mighty people.

By hundreds of thousands in many lands Joseph Smith is today held in remembrance as a Prophet of God. The virtues and achievements of his followers stand as a monument to his divine calling. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has its foundation in the revelations he received, the sacred truths he taught, and the authority of the Priesthood restored through him.

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